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My Social Credo

Grigori Petrovitch Maximov

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minated to the productive associations, and in times of peace would be engaged in productive efforts of a useful kind.

As to peace and public security, a citizen guard's service would be organised for this purpose, with the help of the House Committees. The citizens themselves would in turn fulfil the general duty of defence; that is to say, self-defence with no central organ from above.

The existing courts would be replaced by voluntary tribunals of arbitration, and in cases of grave crimes, connected with manslaughter or offences against liberty and equality, a special communal court of a non-permanent nature would be set up, since courts as permanent institutions would be abolished. Prisons would also be done away with. Schools, hospitals, doctors and -above all — public welfare and liberty might prove the safest means to get rid of criminals and crimes altogether.

Thus, as the warp of the fabric of future anarchist society, there can be laid down, in my opinion, the following three essential and basic institutions:

- a. producers' unions that would lead, through the syndicalisation of production, to a fruitful communism of producers;
- b. consumers' associations that would lead, through utilisation of co-operation, towards a consumers communism;
- c. territorial associations, leading, by way of communalism, to a unity in diversity, that is, a Confederation of Peoples based upon liberty and equality.

However, I do not imagine the future society to be cast in just this rather simplified and schematic mould. To my mind, indeed, it is likely to take on a far more complex configuration, wherein the main texture would be interwoven with such an infinite variety of interlinked groups, that it would readily respond to the most diverse demands and needs of the free human person.

Contents

About The Author	5
My View on Capitalism	8
My View of State Communism	14
What I Believe	16
My View of the Realisation of Anarchism and Communism	20
Economic Structure of Society	21
Political Structure of Society	25

The individualist farms, on a basis of equality with the commune, would be able to avail themselves, free of charge, of the transport facilities, roads, telephones, telegraph, radio, public instruction, medical and public health services, and other public utilities of the commune. However the commune would ask a certain annual contribution from the individual farms, to be paid in kind. The form and amount of this taxation would be laid down by the Convention of the National Confederation of Labour, but its collection would be entrusted to the Bank of the Commune and its branches. to be executed through commodity exchange.

This, as I visualise it, would be the economic regime of the new society on the day after the social revolution.

Political Structure of Society

In the political sphere, the State would be replaced by a Confederation of Free Communes with their Councils(soviets); that is, Communalism would be substituted for Statism. The councils (soviets) of the Communes together with the associations of such councils, up to and including the Confederal Association of Councils, would not be endowed with any prerogatives of power.

With the liberty of the individual as a starting point, the communalist regime -through a free union of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces and of provinces into nations offers the only right solution of the national problem, namely, a natural national unity in diversity, founded on liberty and equality.

As to the organisation of military defence for this society, one can think only of a General Arming of the Workers as the basis for a People's Militia, reinforced by all the technical and organisational attainments of military science. The people's militia, organised on an industrial basis, would be subor-

The farm economy of the transitional period would be represented by the three following basic types: i. individual, ii. co-operative, and iii. communist, the last being part and parcel of the National Commune. The prevailing roles would of course be played by the individual type of farming, in which productive relations based upon private ownership of the product of labour would predominate.

The commune would abstain from entering into any economic relations with the separate individual farms. In consequence, during the transitional period, co-operative activities would assume the function of serving as the only intermediary between the commune and the individualist farms of the entire country. Co-operation would thus integrate, fully and on every level, the millions of individual farms. The co-operative machinery would take approximately the following shape:

- a. Farm Associations for Purchasing and Marketing,
- b. Federation of Farming Associations,
- c. Highest Council of Co-operative Associations.

The co-operative organs of the individual farms would enter into the closest contact with the accounting and distributive organs of the communes. The commune on its side would establish a Bank of Exchange and Credit with numerous branch offices throughout the country. This would transact all exchange and credit operations both at home and abroad.

Thus the individual farms would voluntarily pass on all their surplus produce to their own co-operative associations, which would take upon themselves the functions of purchase and sale. The co-operative associations would transfer their produce to the Bank of the Commune and its branches. They would be paid both by monetary tokens and by all the commodities demanded by consumers. Thus, the market, speculation, commercial capital, and commerce itself, would all be abolished.

About The Author

Gregori Petrovich Maximoff was born on November 10, 1893, in the Russian village of Mitushino in the province of Smolensk. After completing his elementary education he was sent by his father to the theological semi-nary in Vladimir to study for the priesthood: Though he finished the course there, he realized that he was not fitted for that vocation, and went to St. Petersburg, where he entered the Agricultural Academy, graduating as an agronomist in 1915.

At a very early age he became acquainted with the revolutionary movement. He was tireless in his quest for new spiritual and social values, and during his college years he studied the programs and methods of all revolutionary parties in Russia, until he came across some writings of Kropotkin and Stepniak, in which he found confirmation of many of his own ideas that he had worked out by himself. And his spiritual evolution was further advanced when, later on, he discovered in a private library in the Russian interior two works of Bakunin that impressed him deeply. Of all the libertarian thinkers it was Bakunin who appealed most strongly to Maximoff, who was to remain under his spell for the rest of his life.

Maximoff took part in the secret propaganda among the students in St. Petersburg and the peasants in the rural regions, and when finally the long awaited revolution broke out, he established contacts with the labour unions, serving in their shop councils and speaking at their meetings. It was a period of boundless hope for him and his comrades which, however, was shattered not long after the Bolsheviks seized control of the Russian government. He joined the Red Army to fight against the counter-revolution, but when the new masters of Russia used the Army for police work and for the disarming of the people, Maximoff refused to obey orders of that kind and was condemned to death. He owed it to the solidarity and dynamic protests of the steel workers' union that his life was spared.

The last time that he was arrested was on March 8, 1921, at the time of the Kronstadt rebellion, when he was thrown into the Taganka prison in Moscow with a dozen comrades on no other charge than the holding of his Anarchist opinions. Four months later he took part in a hunger strike there which lasted ten and a half days and which had wide reverberations. That strike was ended only after French and Spanish comrades, then attending a congress of the Red Trade Union International, raised their voices against the inhumanity of the Bolshevik government, and demanded that the imprisoned men be freed. The Soviet regime acceded to this demand, on condition that the prisoners, all native Russians, be exiled from their homeland.

That is why Maximoff went first to Germany, where I had the welcome opportunity to meet him and to join the circle of his friends. He remained in Berlin for about three years and then went to Paris: There he stayed for six or seven months, whereupon he emigrated to the United States.

Maximoff wrote a great deal about the human struggle through many years, during which he was at various times an editor of and contributor to libertarian newspapers and magazines in the Russian language. In Moscow he served as co-editor of *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labour), and later of its successor, *Novy Golos Truda* (New Voice of Labour). In Berlin he became the editor of *Rabotchi Put* (Labour's Path), a magazine published by Russian Anarcho-Syndicalists. Settling later in Chicago, he was appointed as editor of *Golos Truzhenika* (Voice of the Toiler), to which he had contributed from Europe. After that periodical ceased to exist, he assumed the editorship of *Dielo Trouda Probuzhdenie* (Labour's Cause-Awakening, a name growing out of the merger of two magazines), issued in New York City, a post he held until his death. The roster of Maximoff's writings in the periodical field makes up a long and substantial bibliography.

To his credit, too, is the writing of a book entitled *The Guillotine at Work*, a richly documented history of twenty years of

Inasmuch as the products of economic activity would be the common property of the National Commune, all members of it would be equals in property rights over the common products. Consumption would therefore be based upon the principle: To each according to their needs, the full realisation of this principle to be dependent on the given commune's wealth and prosperity.

It follows then that the National Commune would be composed of Syndicalised Production, built upon the basis of Communist Relations between the Producers.

Outside the commune, there would remain numerous elements carrying on the methods of individual economy, to wit: handicraftsmen, workers in home industries, and a great proportion of the farmers.

Among artisans and home industry workers the principle of voluntary co-operation must be applied; by offering full scope for self-development, and for initiative, this would open the way for the use of all the achievements of technical progress. These branches of production, united on the pattern of syndicalised communal industries, would be included in the proper unions, forming part of the National Confederation of Labour. But their economic relations with the commune would be regulated along the same lines as those of the individually owned farms.

This principle of co-operation, furthermore, would apply to the privately owned farms, that is to say, individual farms, operating on plots of the socialised land, which plots would of course, cease to be subject to purchase and sale and could not be transferred by inheritance.

Just as the various forms of communal production would be under the jurisdiction of the corresponding industrial unions, so the land, its reclamation and redistribution and also domestic colonisation and agronomy, etc., would be under the control of the Union of Farm Communities, as a constituent element of the National Confederation of Labour.

of extractive industry to which capitalism has already socialised labour, such as those connected with extraction of useful minerals (coal, ore, metals), as well as forestry, fisheries, and the farms where labour, through mechanisation, has already been socialised in the course of the industrial process itself.

The organisational machinery of the communist economy is based upon autonomous factories turned into industrial communes. In its fully developed form this represents an economic Confederation, consisting of the following links:

- a. The basic cell — the autonomous factory or productive commune;
- b. Provincial Confederations of Industrial Federations;
- c. A National Confederation of Labour, or Council of National Economy and Culture.

The industrial or producers' commune would be supplemented by the organisation of the consumers' commune, which would be complementary to it, since production and consumption are inseparably bound together. The consumers' commune, which incidentally would carry out the broader functions of accountancy and distribution as well would be composed of consumers' co-operatives, whose previously existing apparatus could be utilised for the present purpose. The structure of a consumers' commune would be composed of:

- a. House Committees, as the simplest organs of controlling accountancy and distribution;
- b. Local Federations;
- c. National Confederations.

terror in Soviet Russia, published in Chicago in 1940; a volume called Constructive Anarchism, brought out likewise in that city in 1952; a pamphlet, Bolshevism: Promises and Reality, an illuminating analysis of the actions of the Russian Communist Party, issued in Glasgow in 1935 and reprinted in 1937; and two pamphlets published in Russian in Germany earlier — Instead of a Program, which dealt with the resolutions of two conferences of Anarcho-Syndicalists in Russia, and Why and How the Bolsheviks Deported the Anarchists from Russia, which related the experiences of his comrades and himself in Moscow.

Maximoff died in Chicago on March 16, 1950, while yet in the prime of life, as the result of heart trouble, and was mourned by all who had the good fortune to know him.

He was not only a lucid thinker but also a man of stainless character and broad human understanding. And he was a whole person, in whom clarity of thought and warmth of feeling were united in the happiest way. For him, Anarchism was not merely a concern for things to come; but the leit-motif of his own life; it played a part in all of his activities. He also possessed understanding for other conceptions than his own, so long as he was convinced that such beliefs were inspired by good will and deep conviction. His tolerance was as great as his comradely feeling for all who came into contact with him. He lived as an Anarchist, not because he felt some sort of duty to do so, imposed from outside, but because he could not do otherwise, for his innermost being always caused him to act as he felt and thought.

Crompond, N.Y. July, 1952. (From the foreword by Rudolf Rocker to *The Political Philosophy of Michael Bakunin*, compiled by Maximof.)

My View on Capitalism

At the base of contemporary capitalist society lies the principle of private property, owing to which society is divided into two fundamental classes — the capitalists and the proletariat. The former and less numerous class possesses all the capital, the tools and means of production, while the latter and more numerous class is deprived of all these and possesses only its labour-power, both physical and intellectual. Under the pressure of need, the working class sells this power to the capitalists at a price below its real value; the unremunerated part of labour power finds its way, in the form of surplus value, into the pockets of the capitalists. As a result, the latter class is in possession of fabulous wealth, while the proletariat and kindred social groups are afflicted by dire poverty. This contrast stands out most boldly in countries of highly developed capitalism. This contemporary economic order is defended by the entire might of the state, with its morality and its religions.

Capitalist production is commodity production; that is to say, its products are made for the market. The market is the most important feature of the system of distributing goods under capitalism. In such a society, everything is based on purchase and sale. The people, selling to the capitalists their physical and intellectual energy, are a kind of commodity — a living commodity — and the results of their activities, both in the material field and in the domains of science, art and morals, are also marketable goods. Hence a small group of exploiters enjoys the greater share of the fruits of modern science and technology, the fruits — in other words — of the progress of mankind as a whole.

Owing to the economic inequality of the two parties, the principles of free labour and voluntary contract, inherent in the hire of workers, are advantageous only to the capitalists, and any attempt on the part of the proletariat to equalise the conditions of the two parties to the agreement results in perse-

try but cannot effect the collectivisation of Labour. Yet collectivisation of labour is virtually the basis of communism, which is impossible without it.

In consequence of this indisputable fact, society on the day after the social revolution would have to reckon with two basic economic systems which in principle are mutually hostile: a communist and an individualist system — as well as an intermediate and transitional system, the co-operatives. Society would have to establish a form of relationship with the individualist economy that would favour the latter's speedy and painless dissolution in communism. The system of the transitional period would therefore be characterised by Economic Dualism, that is to say, a co-existence of communism and individualism, the former, however, taking over the commanding positions. From this standpoint my view of society in the transitional period is as follows.

Economic Structure of Society

The System of Communist Economy. All the branches of industry where labour has already been socialised by capitalism would be syndicalised; that is, they would pass into the hands of labour organisation, united from below on productive industrial lines upon the principle of Federalism, thus allowing full administrative autonomy to each link in the organisational chain. Furthermore, syndicalised industry would be built on the basis of Communist Industrial Relations.

All manufacturing industry would be subject to syndicalisation, with the exception of the handicraft and domestic industries. Syndicalisation would also apply to all service industries, including transportation, post, telegraph, telephone, radio, public utilities, medical and public health services, statistical, accountancy and distribution organisations, public instruction, science, arts and the theatre; also, to the branches

My View of the Realisation of Anarchism and Communism

The future social revolution must take into account the circumstance that the industry and agriculture inherited by it from capitalism would not be uniform in the degrees of development of their various branches. On the strength of this self-evident fact of insufficient maturity, it might be impractical to communise many individual enterprises. Furthermore, there are entire forms of production, for instance agriculture, whose communisation might prove inadvisable.

Those types of production would be regarded as ripe for communisation in which labour had already been socialised by capitalism, without the socialisation of possessions having yet taken place. This category would undoubtedly include almost all branches of the manufacturing and service industries. But those branches in which, side by side with individual labour, there would also be found individual possession, as is the case in many forms of extractive industry and particularly in farming, would not be considered ripe for communication. Here the path to be followed in the transition to communism is directly opposite to the course to be steered in the manufacturing and service industries. In the latter, the transition would follow this road: from collective labour through collective possession to communism, whereas in the extractive industries the collectivisation of possession ought to be established first, and once this had been done, the transition towards collective labour could begin.

Socialisation of possession is a revolutionary act, involving violence and its success depends on the use of force, whereas the socialisation of labour is a process, which demands for its unfolding the presence of both favourable circumstances and correct timing. Social revolutions, therefore, can immediately introduce the collectivisation of possessions in the whole coun-

cution by the state, which is intent on defending the privileges of capital.

Scientific and technological progress leads to an enormous mechanisation of production, and this process, in turn, results in the concentration of capital and the proletarianisation of the population. The mechanisation of production makes the capitalists increasingly independent of manpower, and enables them to exploit the socially weaker elements among the people — children, women and the aged. Consequently, in the wake of mechanisation there appears growing unemployment, which in due course makes labour even more dependent on capital, thus enhancing the exploitation and destitution of the workers. Present-day industrial techniques make it possible to produce in a shorter time more than is required to cover the needs of all humanity. Yet many millions are in no position to satisfy their most elementary needs of food, clothing and shelter, and are unable to put to use their powers and abilities, since unemployment, formerly a recurrent condition, has become a permanent phenomenon.

In such a situation, the people sink steadily into the abyss of lasting poverty owing to their lack of purchasing power. Innumerable warehouses are filled with unsold wares, while other goods are destroyed so as to prevent a slump in market prices. Production comes to a standstill, unemployment increases, the destitution and political oppression of the people reach an unprecedented intensity, and bourgeois democracy turns into open dictatorship, characterised by an irresponsible and high-handed rule of the police. With a view to forestalling an inevitable economic crisis, and at the same time in the hope of garnering large fortunes, capitalists engage in an intensified search for foreign markets. Competition with capitalists of other lands ensues, and in the meantime the ruling classes of the various countries endeavour to put distant markets under their monopolistic control with the assistance of their respective states, so that the governments readily offer

their armies and navies for the furthering of capitalist ambitions. This is the prelude to war, and in this very way the First World War (1914–18) originated. For the same reason we are today (1933) witnessing the armed pillage, accompanied by mass killing, of the peace-loving populace of China. Capitalism is thus the main source of war; as long as it exists no end to conflict can be seen.

Chaotic production and unorganised, uncontrolled competition for markets have compelled the capitalists to form powerful monopolistic associations, frequently on an international scale — trusts, cartels and syndicates. From the beginning of the twentieth century these associations have gained colossal influence over the economic and political life of every country with a highly developed industry and since that time the development of capitalism has taken the course of merging industrial and financial capital. In other words, capitalism has entered upon a new stage of its growth, a stage called the period of imperialism. One of the main features of this phase is the steadily growing supremacy of financial over industrial capital. At present this supremacy has assumed the form of a dictatorship of banks and stock exchanges; in other words, a dictatorship of the plutocracy. Imperialism is the final stage of capitalism's expansion; beyond which the ultimate process of its decline and decay will inevitably take place.

The modern phenomenon of imperialism, then, is the stage of fully mature capitalism, wherein finance occupies all the commanding positions and we therefore live in a time when capitalism, having attained the goal of its development, has started on the road of degradation and disintegration. This process of decline dates from the time just after the First World War, and it has assumed the form of increasingly acute and growing economic crises, which, during recent years, have sprung up simultaneously in the countries of the victors and the vanquished. At the time of writing (1933–34) the crisis has attacked nearly every country in a veritable world crisis of the

toms, the best of all moral systems. Religion has outlived its right to existence, and I fight against it as a survival of the past. Consequently I am an Atheist.

I believe that the hour for the practical realisation of anarchism has struck. Anarchism has ceased to be a Theory and has become a program, and, accordingly, it has entered upon a Constructive period of its development. I co-operate fervently in this development, and so I am a Constructionist.

I am no maximalist in anarchism, since I hold — in view of all the objective factors — that anarchism can hardly be fully realised at once. On the other hand, I am no minimalist either, for I regard it as inexpedient and unhistorical to break up the realisation of anarchism and communism into a series of consecutive steps in imitation of the socialists. Therefore I reject the “minimum program.” I wish to see anarchism being brought to life today, but the degree to which anarchism and communism would actually be made a reality, I relate directly to the given historical moment. Therefore, within the province of anarchism, I am a Realist.

My realistic belief in the substantiation of anarchism — now and not in the remote and indefinite future — leads me to analyse the present historical time as a whole, and to deduce from such analysis the positive scope, nature and form in which anarchist communism can be realised under the given historical circumstances. This assertion brings me to postulate an inevitable Transition Period from capitalism to an evolving anarchist communism. And in this way the realisation of anarchism and communism in the given moment of history assumes, in my view, the form of a transitional stage, which I designate a Communalist-Syndicalist regime. The nature of that regime I define below.

that the proletariat should be organised in the form of international producers' unions (or associations). I consider that only by direct action, based upon international proletarian solidarity, can the rule of the bourgeoisie and the state be overcome, and that only by the international of productive workers' unions can the moribund capitalist world be superseded. Therefore I am an Internationalist, for whom it is essential to belong to a class and not to a nationality. Yet I nevertheless hold nationality in high esteem as a form of collective manifestation of personality.

The means by which capitalism can be overthrown and communism installed and organised is the seizure of production by the producers' labour unions. Therefore I am a Syndicalist.

Men do not live in order to engage in reciprocal murder, but for the sake of creation and enjoyment, of leading a full, abundant and happy existence, based upon liberty, mutual respect and work by each for all and all for each. Humanity therefore aspires undeniably to peace, which, also, is beyond its reach as long as it lives in circumstances of government and capitalism, which lead to perpetual warfare. I deem it my duty to share these aspirations; I am for world peace. But I know that mankind is able to attain peace only through victorious revolutionary class war against the bourgeoisie. This also implies the annihilation of the capitalist regime with all its institutions, which are shameful and offensive in the eyes of freedom-loving human beings. One among such institutions is the army, with its compulsory service. I am therefore for the abolition of armies and of military budgets in all countries. I am opposed to militarism, and consequently I am an Anti-Militarist.

The lessons of history have convinced me that all religions sanctify and justify slavery, as well as the exploitation of the weak by the strong, and place their Godson the side of those who represent physical might. Religion is thus an obstacle to human progress. Besides, I have no need for divine morality, and consider human ethics, derived from instincts and folk cus-

capitalist system. Its prolonged nature and its universal scope can in no way be accounted for by the theory of periodical capitalist crises. Much rather do these features signify the beginning of a degenerative process within the system itself, a process of dissolution which reacts painfully on the vast toiling masses of humanity, and is bound, in the future, to do so in a still more drastic way.

The 1929 crash of the New York stock exchange (an event of world wide significance) inevitably plunged into bankruptcy innumerable small and medium-sized industrial concerns. It ruined a multitude of financial and commercial institutions, and brought about a triumphal ascendancy of financial capital, which has overwhelmingly subordinated to its control the industry, commerce and agriculture of our country; it brought in its wake vast unemployment and a catastrophic impoverishment of the broad masses of the people.

Thus the New York stock exchange crash meant, fundamentally, the worldwide establishment of an absolute dictatorship of financial capital, a dictatorship of a small group of potentates who are mutually antagonistic on account of their monetary interests. Yet, despite its inner contradictions and notwithstanding all the assertions of the Marxian economists, capitalism in its modern imperialistic guise has managed to eliminate unorganised market competition and to gauge accurately the market's capacities. More than this, it has proved capable of establishing — to use a Bolshevik phrase — a "planned economy", based on a calculation of purchasing power, as well as upon a "nationalisation of production." However, the inner contradictions of capitalism could not be removed in this way. On the contrary, they have tended to grow and to become increasingly more acute. The "planned economy" of imperialism, with its "nationalised" production, founded on the principle of private property whose driving force is personal interest and the thirst for unlimited gain at the expense of the toiling masses, is itself becoming the source of the decline of the capitalist system, Its

calculations are based not upon the real needs of the people, but upon their purchasing power. In accordance with the fluctuations of this purchasing power the production of goods is expanded or curtailed. But, keeping in mind the fact that financial dictatorship implies the ruin of numberless small and medium sized proprietors and enterprisers, and the creation of millions of unemployed among workers who had formerly been serving those masters who are not destitute, one can rightly expect that a heavy curtailment of production must naturally take place. The making of goods is cut in proportion to the reduced purchasing power, and accordingly the army of the unemployed increases, while at the same time the impoverishment of the masses steadily grows.

Now, therefore, in order to make goods available to the impoverished consumer, capitalism is forced to lower prices. Yet any price reduction, without a concurrent decline in the businessman's rate of profit, can only be attained by means of lowering the cost of production, or the cost price of the product. This, in turn, can be achieved, in the first place, by wage cuts, i.e. a still greater impoverishment of a still greater number of people, and secondly, by the rationalisation of production through increased mechanisation of production processes and a lesser dependence of the manufacturer on man-power. In consequence of this, a rise in the number of unemployed is bound to occur once again, with an ever-greater contraction of the people's purchasing power. Thus a further lowering of production results, with the recurrence of all the consequences briefly described above. Hence the "planned economy" of capitalism and its "rationalised production" process, aimed essentially at one single target — private gain — lead logically to an increasingly brutal dictatorship and to an intensifying concentration of financial capital, as well as to an unnecessary curtailment of national production and constantly rising unemployment and poverty. In short, capitalism, which has given birth to a new social scourge,

direct action against capitalism and the state, and therefore I am a revolutionary.

I believe that only a stateless form of society is compatible with human progress, and that only under such a form of commonwealth will humanity be able to attain full liberty, and therefore I am an anarchist.

I believe that anarchism, as a political form of society, is only feasible in circumstances of the complete liberty of the constituent members of the social body, as opposed to centralised rule over them. This liberty can only be safeguarded through the principle of federalisation; therefore I am a Federalist, or, more precisely, a Confederalist.

I believe that for the utmost realisation and independence within a federation, the latter must be formed of primary political organisations. This kind of organisation implies the setting up of communes. Therefore, I am a Communalist.

But either liberty or anarchism is unthinkable unless, within the commune, the principle of the free individual is stringently observed. Society has been established in order to satisfy the many and diverse needs of the human being, and these individual needs are by no means to be sacrificed to the community. Personality and its interests, and first of all its freedom, are the fundamentals of the new world of a free and creative society of workers. Therefore I am an Individualist.

I believe, however, that it is not enough to enjoy political liberty alone. In order to be free, in the real sense of the word, one must also be endowed with economic freedom. This kind of freedom, I am convinced, is unattainable without the abolition of private property and the organisation of communal production on the basis of "from each according to their ability" and of communal consumption on the principle of "to each according to their needs." Therefore I am a Communist.

I believe that anarchism and communism are feasible on an international scale only, and I do not believe in them in one country alone. Therefore to my mind it is urgently necessary

brought us back via “military communism” to the point of departure, to capitalism or — more correctly — to state capitalism.

Under the bankrupt state capitalism of Russia and the discredited socialist democracy of Germany, and also as a consequence of the intensified decline of capitalist society throughout the world, the fight of the workers is growing and expanding against the existing regime and its tendency to replace the moribund bourgeois world by a regime of state slavery. In this respect a particular importance must be given to the revolutionary struggle of the Spanish proletariat, an event of the greatest historical significance.

Meanwhile, continuous technical progress, leading as it does to the consolidation of industrial concerns and the socialisation of their production, creates the indispensable material circumstances for the transition of capitalist economy both feasible and realistic a successful social revolution, which is the supreme goal of the inter-national anarchist movement of the working classes.

What I Believe

I believe that it behooves every honest man to urge the toiling masses not to let the flames of revolution be extinguished. On the contrary, their orbit should be widened, through a stimulated alertness and independence and the creation of free labour institutions. These should be of a type suitable to take into the workers’ own hands, on the overthrow of capitalism, the organisation of a free life upon the just principles of dignified work.

I fully agree with the slogan of the First International: “The liberation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves,” and I believe in the class struggle as a powerful means to freedom. I believe that the proletariat is capable of attaining its full liberty only through revolutionary violence; that is, by

is unable to get rid of its own evil offspring without killing itself in the process. The logical development of this trend must unavoidably bring about the following dilemma: either a complete disintegration of human society, or the abolition of capitalism and the creation of anew, more progressive social and political system. There can be no other alternative. The modern form of social organisation has run its course and is proving, in our times, an obstacle to human advance, as well as a source of social decay; This out-worn system is therefore due to be relegated to the museum of social evolutionary relics.

The days of capitalism are numbered. In its organism the process of decomposition moves forward very rapidly indeed. All the cures, under the guise of various reforms (towards which, incidentally, capitalism puts up an obstinate resistance) can only prolong the agony, but are useless as a means for full recovery. In the past, capitalism would have saved itself from deadly crisis by seizing colonial markets and those of agrarian nations. Nowadays, most of the colonies are themselves competing in the world market with the metropolitan countries, while the agrarian lands are proceeding in the direction of intensive industrialisation; For the sake of their own security, but with an utter disregard of the people’s interests, the capitalist countries keep on erecting high tariff barriers between themselves, thus endeavouring to escape from an inevitable fate. This, however, proves of as little avail to the moribund system as medicine would be to a corpse.

Since political life is determined by economic forms, the degenerative process which is turning bourgeois democracy into dictatorship is self-explanatory. With an economic dictatorship of financial capital there must arise a corresponding political dictatorship over the nation. Accordingly, we are now witnessing parliaments degenerating either into personal dictatorships (Italy, Poland, etc.) or into group dictatorships (U.S.A., France, Germany, etc.) the government becoming an obedient and submissive tool in the hands of banks and stock

exchanges. Parliamentary democracy, at present, is no more than a protective covering for disguised dictatorship. And dictatorship in any shape is merely an outward symptom of the dissolution of the old social form, an attempt on the part of the dying capitalism to stop the forward march of progress, which, despite all obstacles, clears for us the road of transition, an uphill and narrow road, to the more perfect forms of organised social existence.

My View of State Communism

The greatest attempt in all history to effect a transition into a newer social form, the Russian Revolution of 1917–21, has made it possible actually to undertake the construction of state communism, and this example offers an opportunity of defining and analysing the regime of authoritarian communism.

One of its typical features lies in production being based upon bureaucratic relationships. In other words, all instruments and means of production and distribution, as well as the people's labour and the human individual himself, are entirely vested in the state, which in its turn is the exclusive property of a scanty class of Bureaucracy. The rest of the people are proletarianised and forced to give their labour power to state trusts, thus creating by their toil the might of these trusts and providing a higher economic position for the ruling class.

The bureaucratic production relationships cover the whole of social life and place the working class in absolute dependence on the state, i.e. on the bureaucracy. The entire population is subdivided by the state into occupational groups and is subjected to the control of a class of officials under whom it is compelled to labour. Moreover, the state creates new grounds for economic inequality through the principle of a differentiated scale of wages in accordance with the differences in usefulness of various occupations; it grants privileges, and regards

the human person as nothing more than a source of labour power. The state, moreover shuffles the mass of labour power at will over the length and breadth of the land, paying no attention to any other circumstances than its own interests, thus forcing men and women to toil under the strict and rigorous conditions of military discipline.

In this way, the state commune transforms the workers into soulless parts in the huge, centralised communist machine, parts who are obliged to be directed for their whole lives to a single purpose — the maximum fulfilment of certain production tasks decreed by the state, and who are condemned to a minimum field of initiative, independent action and personal choice. Such a state of affairs postulates social inequality while, at the same time, it reinforces the class structure of society and the predominance of the bureaucracy.

An unavoidable result of this kind of social organisation is a strong police state, which subjugates to itself every manifestation of the citizens' lives. Strong by reason of its centralised power, the communist state subjects everybody to police regimentation and, with the help of espionage, keeps a vigilant eye upon each and all. Such a system is bound to destroy all liberty and inevitably institutes state slavery; one can look in vain for freedom of association, of assembly, of knowledge and enlightenment and education, while the inviolability of personal liberty and the privacy of the home are conspicuously absent.

The development of this system leads inevitably to an exacerbation of its inner contradictions, and just as under private capitalism — to a class struggle. It is, however, a more difficult struggle, and one that is likely to be suppressed with even fiercer cruelty than under bourgeois capitalism. The Russian experiment, judged quite independently of its builders, has fully demonstrated the unworkableness of such a regime.

The Russian revolution, having set out with liberty and the liquidation of bourgeois society as its starting point, has, owing to its recourse to the aristocratic principle of dictatorship,